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Soviet U.N. employees may be violating rules

By Bill Gertz
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Soviet United Nations employees may be violating U.N. rules that prohibit secretariat staff members from accepting free housing at the large Soviet diplomatic compound in Riverdale, N.Y., U.S. officials said yesterday.

The charges came only days after FBI agents in New York arrested a U.N. secretariat employee on espionage charges. A prosecutor in the case said other investigations of suspected Soviet spies currently are under way.

The employee, Gennadiy Fedorovich Zakharov, was ordered held without bond in New York yesterday by U.S. Magistrate Carol Amon, who turned down an appeal from Soviet Ambassador Yuri Dubinin that Mr. Zakharov be released into Soviet Embassy custody.

In denying bail, Magistrate Amon said the ambassador's assurance that Mr. Zakharov would not flee the country "does not provide assurances to this court that Mr. Zakharov will appear when required."

"It is not the ambassador who faces these charges, it is Mr. Zakharov," she said. "He poses a very serious risk of flight."

U.S. officials believe more Soviet KGB intelligence officers are operating among the approximately 272 Soviet U.N. employees living at the Riverdale complex, an administration source said. But prosecuting the cases would be difficult because the alleged spies live in an official Soviet diplomatic compound, the source said.

The Soviet government owns a large residential compound on 5400 Fieldstone Road in the Riverdale section of the Bronx, just north of Manhattan, under diplomatic agreement with the U.S. government. The property, which includes a main consular building more than 20 stories tall and a school for dependents, is considered sovereign Soviet territory.

"Soviet spies are operating without diplomatic immunity, yet live in a diplomatically immune compound," said one source.

U.N. staff regulations prohibit secretariat

employees from receiving any gifts or from "taking direction" from foreign countries or organizations, U.N. spokesman Joe Sills said yesterday.

Mr. Sills said he could not confirm that Soviet U.N. employees reside at the Riverdale complex, but said he was aware of reports that secretariat employees live at the compound.

"If Soviet U.N. employees were receiving free housing at the compound, it would be a violation of U.N. staff regulations," Mr. Sills said.

Robert C. Moller, an official at the U.S. mission to the United Nations said in an interview: "We know there are people living in the Riverdale complex that are secretariat people. A person who works at the U.N. is supposed to be independent of any country or government. If they are civil servants, they are not supposed to receive anything from a [U.N.] mission."

U.N. employees, he said, "take an oath not to take direction from a foreign government and then they go back to the Riverdale compound and meet with [U.N.] mission people and the ambassador, which is not permitted." Some of the Soviet employees, he said, live in apartments rented by the Soviet government near the compound, as was the case with Mr. Zakharov.

Mr. Moller said U.S. officials do not know if the Soviet U.N. employees pay for the housing, meals and other benefits afforded to Soviet diplomats at the compound.

U.S. Attorney Andrew Maloney said earlier this week that federal agents have been investigating suspected spies among Soviet diplomats and Soviet U.N. employees, although he said no arrests were expected in the near future.

Mr. Zakharov, who was arrested Saturday trying to buy secret U.S. defense documents, is expected to enter a plea in the case early next month.

At the bail hearing yesterday in Brooklyn, N.Y., Vladimir Kuleshov, general counsel for Soviet Embassy in Washington, told reporters, "We consider this a false accusation and a provocation against our people."